

A LITTLE KNOWN CIVILIZATION.*

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By "civilization" I mean the advance which any people has made from a primitive low estate to one of considerable refinement and intelligence. The subject of this paper is not the civilization of the lost Atlantis, nor that of the Mayas, the Incas, the Toltecs, the Aztecs, nor of any nation of Central or South America; nor that of the Mound-builders and others of North America. Neither is it on those civilizations in other parts of the world, the theme of many an ancient story. Mine is not a treatise on the conquests of Alexander, of Philip, of Cæsar, the Saracens, nor of others of by-gone or modern times, nor do I mean the kingdoms of whom a poet has said:

"Sometimes a little kingdom stretches out,
And elbows all the kingdoms round about;
Crushed by its own unwieldy weight
It rushes onward to its fate.
Thus, headlong down the stream of time it goes,
And sinks in moments, what in ages rose."

It is on a civilization at our own doors, in this province and in Southern Alaska—the civilization of the Haidas, or as they pronounce their name Hidery, the signification of the name being People. This civilization in various forms spread over the greater part of British Columbia and part of the adjoining State of Washington, and all Southern Alaska. Its greatest development, in one form, was amongst the Quackuts on this island and on the mainland adjoining. In another and more extensive form it was found along the Rivers Naas and Skeena, amongst the Simskeans and numerous other tribes on the mainland and isles adjoining; on the Queen Charlotte group and on the southern isles of Alaska. Although some writers classify all of these tribes as Haida, I shall treat only of the various tribes who call themselves by the name of Haida, or rather Hidery, because among them this civilization was best developed. Having spent many years amongst these people (that is the Queen Charlotte Hidery), I know them best, and shall to the best of my ability explain the unique hieroglyphics on their *gargings*, that is their totem poles and houses.

While giving readings of such difficult matter as are these ancient picture writings, I do not say they are perfect. A description of their clans and crests is but a history of these people and their civilization. There are, as part of their social

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usages, three sorts of crests. 1, the clan crest; 2, the sex crest; 3, the individual crest. The first two are called by the Hidery ton; for example, the Kimquestan ton is the frog's crest; the Choo-itza ton is the wolf's crest; the Chootsa ton is the bear's crest. The first of them is a distinguishing mark or coat of arms, inherited and acquired. The sex crest is one inherited from the mother which controlled the system of marriages. For example, a man or woman was not allowed to take a wife or husband from the same crest. If the one belonged to the raven phratry the other had to belong to the eagles. The third was not in reality a crest, it is a totem. Among the Indians of North America the totem is an animal, a bird or a fish, and is regarded as the protector of tribes and individuals. The above-mentioned clans or crests were in two great divisions called phratries or brotherhoods. These two phratries had their representatives in the raven and eagle. In some villages the raven was the highest, in others the eagle. Each of these phratries was divided into clans or crests, which were likewise represented by a certain object.

The crests belonging to the raven were eleven. Their English names I give first, then the Hidery. First comes the wolf, "chooitza"; the bear, "choots"; the scannah or killer whale, "the skate-fetra"; the mountain goat, "mut"; the sea lion, "the chee-mouse"; a river, "snag"; the moon, "kung"; the sun, "troore"; the rainbow, named "coot-coo-towell-coh-coot-coo," meaning the roadway of the angels; and lastly, the thunder bird, "scamsum".

The eagle phratry had fourteen crests or clans, namely, the eagle, "choot"; the raven, "cho-e-ah"; the frog, "kimquestan"; the beaver, "sing"; the moon, "kung"; the shark, "san cuchuda" or dogfish mother; the duck, "ha ha"; the codfish, the wasco, an extinct land and water animal resembling an alligator; the whale, "boon"; the owl, "coot-quee-ness"; the dogfish, "cachada"; the sculpin, "bahie"; the dragon-fly, "chicka".

These were the crests or coats of arms for the clans, and as soon as a youth or maiden had the means to pay for it, they had themselves tattooed with all the crests belonging to their phratry—the boys on their breasts, arms and legs, the girls on their arms and legs. By doing so they not only raised higher but got a better name. They were also by these means initiated into other privileges in unison with the social usages of their nation or people.

As I said before, a man or woman could take a wife or husband from any phratry but their own, or in other words a man was allowed to take a wife from any crest belonging to the eagle phratry, provided he himself was of the ravens, and so forth through all the others.

All the people belonging to one phratry were considered as related and consequently lived together in one of those large houses which were often seen in a village. There were a number of very good points in this civilization; for instance, when

any person had the misfortune to be taken a prisoner of war and was conveyed to a village belonging to hostile parties, what he had to do on landing was to look along the village for a crest showing his own clan. If he found one, all he had to do was to tell his captors, "I belong to such a crest or clan; let me go to such a house." They would give him his liberty, saying "go; you are safe." Although the two tribes were still at war, as long as he chose to live there he was safe. If he or she wished to go home they had a safe conduct to the boundary of their own country. If any one were hungry or sick or blind in a strange village, or old and infirm at home, without relations, those of their crest had to take care of them, and if they died they had to dispose of the body in the dead house belonging to the same crest.

If a party from a distant village went to another, on arrival they divided, each one taking his or her abode in the house which showed their several crests; while there they were entertained free of charge, and those not belonging to it were expected to pay or, at least, make a few presents. From long-forgotten ages down to within a few years past, every one who could afford to keep them had a number of slaves obtained by purchase from other tribes or taken as prisoners of war. When a chief or slaveowner died his slaves were killed in order that they might be useful to their dead owners in the other life. Moreover, when a house was being built a slave was killed and his or her body placed on the bottom of the hole in which the *guyring* or main carved column was to stand, its lower end being placed on the body. If a slave had been killed for that purpose an image of a man or woman, as the case might be, was carved with their head down, on the lower part of the column, showing what had been done. I have never yet known nor heard of the Hidery killing slaves for that purpose. Being always on the make, to the Hidery one living slave was worth forty dead ones. So they quietly sold a slave to another tribe. Of course they had to place an image, with the head down, all the same as if one had been killed and the body placed underneath.

Every man was expected to build a house during his lifetime; more especially when he took to himself a wife. With the house he had to raise his column on the front, showing the social standing of himself and wife, the wife's crest being generally placed on the top of the post, while his own was placed on the bottom. Every house when finished got a name, either connected with the house or the people living in it or some event happening while in course of erection. For instance, the house of the owls, "nah coot quinees," owl house; the people living in it were owl house people—too quinees Hidery—so named because they belonged to the coot-quinees ton or owl crest. A house through which the wind sounded was named "neh querga-heegan." That is, wind sounding house. A house in which were a lot of boxes or had a box for its door step was

named "cotta nass," box house. "Cotta" (box), and ("nass"), house of, i. e., house of the boxes. Such names as "nah bleehas," new house; "nah youans," large house; "loah heeldans," house of the shaking or earthquake, because while building it there happened a severe one. The house in which the rainbow clan lived was named rainbow house, and the people rainbow people—"coot-coo-towlh-cah-coot-coo hidery." One house in Skidegate was named "seen-ah-coot-kai-nai," house of contentment. One man built a house and looking over the house when finished said, "I have a regular thunder and lightning house." So he named it "now gah-deelans." "Now-gah" (house best), "deelans" (thunder and lightning.) Often a figure on top of the house showed its name. For example, a raven on top of a house gave the name. "chooacah-nass," the ravens' house, because all the people living in it were of the raven clan or ton, as the Hidery call it.

Before I take up the subject of crests I shall begin with the two phratries, the raven and the eagle. The eagle I shall take first. Not far from the last end of Skidegate town, Queen Charlotte Islands, formerly stood a house named "choot nass," Eagle's house, because all the people who lived in it belonged to the eagle clan. The eagle, commonly chosen as their representative or coat of arms, is a bird very common on those islands—the bald, or white-headed variety. I had a model of this house made and sent to the World's Fair. It always drew a great amount of attention, not only for its elaborate carvings but for the stories connected with it. I shall now give a reading of its picture writings, including the story of the eagles.

On the projecting ends of the roof beams, six in number, were six bears; on top of the two front corner-posts were as many eagles. The bears showed the crest of the husband, and the eagles that of his wife, and at the same time gave the name of the house to be "Choot nass," the eagle's house. The figures on the post—on the totem post—were seven figures, namely, a man, a brown bear, a young bear. These show that the man who built this house belonged to the bear clan, and the young bear that he had a son. This part belongs to the husband alone. The next part belongs entirely to the wife. The fourth figure was a dog-fish with a woman's head. This woman had several names; first, Hath-lingzo, or bright sunshine; and second, "Callicah jude," or woman of the ice; and the third was "Ittal-cah-jud," or typical woman of the Hidery. In this paper I can only tell the story of the eagles; were I to tell the story of the bears and of the woman it would be too long, so I must leave them to another time. This much I shall say, that the woman got the name of woman of the ice because in by-gone ages, Haida tradition says, when the people fled before the encroachment of the ice she was the leader of the Hidery people to a country further south. In all the Hidery carriages she is represented as having a large labret or lip piece. In by-gone days every Hidery woman's ambition was to be like her.

The third figure is the king of the eagles, and the first one connected with the wife's crest and story. The sixth figure is the "Atiseek" mentioned in the story. The seventh and last figure is the eagles. The scene of the story is laid in the south of Queen Charlotte's islands, in Skiddanses country, and is as follows:

Long ago a king lived in Captain Skiddanse's country who had a sister. She and her family lived with him and kept his house. How many of a family she had tradition does not say; one boy, the hero of our story, being mentioned in particular. This boy in some manner displeased his uncle, who turned him out of doors. Having no home nor anywhere to go, he wandered about aimlessly. One day three women overtook him, one of them being ahead of the other two. The one to find him was a princess, her father being king of the eagles. Having heard his story and being a nice-looking boy, she asked him to come with her and she would introduce him to her father. This invitation he gladly accepted. She led him into the timber. They came to a town up on a tree. It was a town of the eagles. A large number of them were flying about; they lived in this town. After a while she presented him to her father, saying, "Father, I have found a nice husband." The old king was highly pleased to think he had such a nice looking son-in-law. This boy, as I shall call him, soon became a great favorite with the old king by studying his ways and likings, as well as attending to his every expressed want. One day the old king said: "I very much want a piece of whale fish for dinner. The words were hardly spoken when the boy was dressed in a suit of the old king's wings and flew off, returning before evening with a piece. Thus prepared, he had flown over the sea until he had found a lot of whales. Out of one he cut a piece and started for home. This very much pleased the old king and led him to like the boy more than ever. Being able to fly pleased the boy so much that he was always on the wing. After a while he badly wanted to have a dress of his own, so in order to obtain his wish he and his wife spoke to the old king, who went to a box from which he took feathers enough to make the boy a full-fledged eagle.

Again, another day, the old man asked him to get him some more whale meat when he returned. This time he flew further than he usually did, going to where the sea was full of whales in every direction. Among so many he was able to catch one, which he presently took home and gave to the old king. This led the old king to like the boy more than before. After this the boy spent whole days flying about, returning only late at night. Noting his fondness for spending his time amongst the whales, the old king told him to be careful and shun every appearance of danger, and, above all, to be on the outlook for "Ah-seek." If he saw it floating about on the water he was not to trouble it by any means, because it would do him a deal of harm if he were not careful.

For a long time he profited by the old king's advice, until one day he saw a strange looking object floating about. In order to see what it was he took hold of it. Instantly it took hold of his hand, and pulled him down and kept him under the water. While held down by "Ah-seek," for such it was, he managed to always have one hand or arm held above water. When the boy did not return, all the other eagles went to search for him. After flying about for a long time over the water they all, one by one, came to where "Ah-seek" lived. The first one took hold of the boy's arm and tried to pull him out. As soon as he touched the boy's hand he, too, went under, his arm being also held up. Thus every one in turn went under, the arm of the last one being held above water. Seeing that neither the boy nor the eagles returned, the mother eagle, fearing "Ah-seek," went to look for the lost ones. When she came to where he lived, and saw the upheld arm of the last eagle, she knew at once what had become of them all. Now, "Ah-seek" having no power over the old lady, she took hold of the upheld arm and pulled them out one by one, hand over fist, until they were all out. When she had them all out she passed her hand over them all and restored them to their first estate, saying, "What are you doing here? Go home." So they altogether flew home a happy lot.
